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Chapter 12

Reporting Changes

1200 Household Responsibility

1. Applicant Households
An applicant household must report all changes related to its food assistance eligibility and benefit level at the certification interview.
2. Certified Households
Certified households are subject to the reporting requirements found in [Chapter 17](#).

1201 Mass Changes

Certain changes are initiated by the State or Federal government which may affect the entire caseload or significant portions of the caseload.

These changes include, but are not limited to:

1. Adjustments to the gross and net income eligibility standards.
2. The shelter and dependent care deduction.
3. The Thrifty Food Plan (the allotment based on household size and income) and standard deduction.
4. Annual adjustment to the Standard Utility Allowance, Basic Utility Allowance, and telephone standard.
5. Periodic cost-of-living adjustments to Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI), Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and other federal benefits.
6. Periodic adjustments to Family Assistance (FA).
7. Other changes in the eligibility and benefit criteria based on legislative or regulatory changes.

A. Federal Adjustments to Food Assistance Budgeting

Adjustments to eligibility standards, allotments and deductions, and State adjustments to utility standards shall go into effect for **all households** at the same point in time, by automation.

October 1 of each year is the date these changes are effective, unless otherwise specified by changes in federal regulations. A Notice of Adverse Action is not needed for these changes as households shall be informed of these changes through publicity issued by the State office.

B. Mass Changes in Public Assistance

When the State agency makes an overall adjustment to public assistance (PA) payments, corresponding adjustments in household's food assistance benefits shall be handled as a mass change by automation.

C. Mass Changes in Federal Benefits

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAS) in Social Security and SSI Benefits shall be handled by automation to be effective January 1 of each year for all NA households.

D. Notices for Mass Changes

When a mass change for other than Item **A** above is made, individual computer generated notices will be sent to all affected households.

E. Fair Hearings

A household shall be entitled to request a fair hearing when it is aggrieved by a mass change.

F. Continuation of Benefits

A household which requests a fair hearing due to a mass change shall be entitled to continued benefits at its previous level only if the household meets three criteria:

1. The household does not specifically waive its right to a continuation of benefits.
2. The household requests a fair hearing in accordance with [Chapter 15](#).
3. The household's fair hearing is based upon improper computation of food assistance eligibility or benefits, or upon misapplication or misinterpretation of Federal law or regulation.

1202 Changes in Food Assistance in PA Households

The county department may not terminate a household's food assistance benefits solely because it has terminated the household's PA benefits without a separate determination that the household fails to satisfy the eligibility requirements for participation in the program.

Whenever a change in a PA household result in the reduction or termination of the household's PA benefits within its food assistance certification period, and the county department has sufficient information to determine how the change affects the household's food assistance eligibility and benefit level, the county department shall take the following actions:

1. If the change requires both a reduction or termination in the PA payment and a reduction or termination in food assistance benefits, the county department shall issue a single Notice of Adverse Action for both the PA and food assistance actions.

If the household requests a fair hearing within the period provided by the Notice of Adverse Action, the household's food assistance benefits must be continued on the basis authorized immediately prior to sending the notice.

If the fair hearing is requested for both programs' benefits, the hearing must be conducted according to PA procedures and timeliness standards. However, the household must reapply for food assistance benefits if the food assistance certification period expires before the fair hearing process is completed. If the household does not appeal, the change must be made effective in accordance with the procedures specified in [Section 1706](#).

2. If the household's food assistance benefits will increase as a result of the reduction or termination of PA benefits, the county department must issue the PA Notice of Adverse Action, but must not take any action to increase the household's food assistance benefits until the household decides whether it will appeal the PA adverse action.

If the household decides to appeal and its PA benefits are continued, the household's food assistance benefits must continue at the previous level. If the household does not appeal, the county department must make the change effective in accordance with the procedures specified in [Section 1706](#) except that the time limits to act on changes which increase a household's benefits must be calculated from the date the PA Notice of Adverse Action period expires.

3. If the change results in the termination of a household's PA benefits within its food assistance certification period, and the county department does not have sufficient information to determine how the change affects the household's food assistance eligibility and benefit level (such as when an absent parent returns to a household and asks to have its Family Assistance case closed without providing any information on the income of the new household member), the county department must take the following action:

If the situation requires a reduction or termination of PA benefits, the county department must issue a Request for Additional Information (PSD-958) in accordance with the procedures specified in [Section 1706](#) at the same time it sends a PA notice of adverse action. Before taking further action, the county department must wait until the household's PA notice of adverse action period expires or until the household requests a fair hearing, whichever occurs first. If the household requests a fair hearing and elects to have its PA benefits continued pending the appeal, the county department must continue the household's food assistance benefits at the same level.

4. If the household decides not to request a fair hearing and continuation of its PA benefits, the county department must resume action on the changes as specified in [Section 1706](#). Depending on the household's response to the Request for Additional Information, the county department must take appropriate action, if necessary, to close the household's case or adjust the household's benefit amount.

Whenever PA benefits are terminated but the household remains eligible for food assistance benefits, the household shall be advised of food assistance work registration requirements, if applicable, as their JOBS registration exemption no longer applies. Also, the resources of the household shall be evaluated in accordance with [Chapter 8](#). All eligibility requirements for food assistance must now be applied.